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SUBJECT: A GREAT BARGAIN IN BAGHDAD: DOURA MARKET REVIVES
DUE TO SECURITY GAINS

Classified By: Political Counselor Ellen Germain, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) The Doura Market in Baghdad's Rashid district -- formerly one of the city's most dangerous areas -- has experienced a rebirth over the course of the past six months due to significant gains in security for residents of the Doura neighborhood. The improvements are visible and measurable. Since June, the number of open shops has increased from 15 to 451, half of the market's capacity of approximately 900 shops. Though it was a thriving center of commerce before the war, in 2006 and early 2007 Doura Market became a major target for improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and mass casualty attacks carried out by insurgents and terrorists. Primarily due to efforts by Coalition Forces, aided by the increasingly effective Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the installation of hardened T-walls, the market and its surrounding areas have experienced a notable revitalization. The local Battalion reported that another major factor in the market's renewal was the enrollment of many local unemployed and under-employed males in the Concerned Local Citizens (CLC) group, through which they have helped to provide security to the Doura neighborhood. The Battalion has also worked with Iraqi Security Forces to keep black market activities, such as illicit fuel sales, off the highways and main roads that pass through Doura.

12. (U) Representatives of the Baghdad PRT and the EPRT covering Rashid district observed the renewed vibrancy during a December 22 tour of Doura Market. Hundreds of customers -- apparently Sunni, Shia, and Christian, according to locals and the Battalion -- were present along the several blocks of the market area. The customers crowded into the stalls and shops. Women in hijabs and head-to-toe abayas shopped alongside women in western dress. The stores were full of merchandise. Garbage trucks were visible on the streets, clearing trash and debris. Locals reported that the schools were in session and that some IDPs, including Christians, have begun returning to their homes in Doura.

13. (C) Larger issues continue to plague Doura, however, including mounting tension between province- and city-wide institutions, on the one hand, and the Rashid District Council and Doura Neighborhood Council, on the other. (NOTE: This tension plagues inter-governmental relations in many other Baghdad districts and neighborhoods. END NOTE.) The Provincial Council, the Governor, and the Amanat -- all dominated by Shia political parties -- question the legitimacy of the Rashid district and neighborhood councils, in part, locals claim, because the councils include Sunni representatives. Also, locals report that the Amanat has not provided adequate resources to its Rashid district office (or "Beladiya"), thereby hampering provision of essential services to the entire Rashid district. Moreover, Coalition Forces continue to pay for CLC salaries and for trash pick-up in the Doura neighborhood. (NOTE: The USG currently funds the garbage collection program from which Doura and other Baghdad neighborhoods benefit. This program will end in

2008, potentially releasing into the ranks of the unemployed approximately 20,000 workers in Baghdad, unless the GoI or the Amanat begins to pay their salaries. END NOTE.) To help the GoI to address these issues, and other upcoming challenges, the Baghdad PRT, EPRT, and 4/1 Brigade Combat Team continue to facilitate constructive dialogue among the leaders of local, provincial and national institutions.

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